



*This chapter is dedicated to my entire loving and supportive family and my dear friend, Christie Pearce-Rampone. Christie's enduring success is the inspiration and motivation for my fitness-training career.*

**F**or many years, circuit training has been a popular method to increase strength and conditioning. With circuit training, the idea is to perform a series of exercises (or activities) in a sequence (or “circuit”) at a quick pace. In other words, there’s very little recovery between each “station.”

## ADVANTAGES

Circuit training offers several advantages over other forms of exercising. Consider the following:

- **Circuit training is a very enjoyable way for you to work out and get fit.**
- **It’s an extremely efficient method of training. You can achieve favorable results in a relatively short period of time.**
- **Almost anyone can perform circuit training. There are levels for beginners and intermediates as well as for those who are advanced or experienced in exercising.**
- **It presents a terrific opportunity for friends, relatives and coworkers to become training partners and bond with one another.**
- **Circuit training has the potential for a great deal of variety and preferences. You can manipulate the number of exercises in the circuit, the amount of time (or number**

**of repetitions) for each exercise and the amount of recovery between exercises. (Keep in mind that these variables – in particular, the amount of recovery that you take between exercises – are related to your level of fitness.)**

- **If executed properly, circuit training is an excellent method for improving strength, stamina and flexibility. Truly, it’s a total all-around workout!**

## WARMING UP

One of the most important aspects of any workout is warming up. This is especially true of circuit training. For fun – as well as for variety – pick an aerobic activity that you enjoy. Indoors, you can warm up by using a treadmill, stationary bicycle, elliptical machine, stairclimber/stepper or rowing machine; outdoors, you can warm up by walking, jogging or jumping rope. You can also do calisthenic-type activities such as jumping jacks.

You should do the warm-up activity for about five minutes at a moderate pace. Remember, this is just a warm-up so don’t overexert yourself or expend too much energy. Doing so can produce excessive fatigue which will hinder your performance during circuit training. More importantly, overexerting yourself during the warm-up may put you at risk for an injury. Always

## Chapter 5

### Circuit Training

Michael D. Greenblatt, B.S.  
Fitness Trainer  
Ocean Township, New Jersey





**Figure 5.1:**  
**Sample of a Circuit-  
Training Workout for a  
Beginner Level.**

Chest Press

Lat Pulldown

Aerobic Activity

Bicep Curl

Abdominal Machine

Aerobic Activity



finish your warm-up routine with some gentle stretching, holding each stretch for at least 20 seconds.

## CIRCUIT-TRAINING PROGRAMS

There are several types of circuit-training programs. Whether you're a beginner, intermediate or advanced enthusiast, the routine that you select should be one that increases your strength, stamina and flexibility. Depending on your level of experience – beginner, intermediate or advanced – the goal is to perform each strength-training exercise for about 20-40 seconds using good technique (not using too much momentum). It's very important to do each exercise with a level of resistance that's about 50% of your maximum strength. After taking no more than about 40 seconds to recover, proceed to the next exercise/activity (again, depending on your level of experience). You can also include aerobic (or cardiorespiratory) activities at various points in the circuit.

In brief, circuit training looks something like this: you begin at a particular station and complete one set of an exercise. After this, you move to the next station in the circuit where you set up for your next exercise and recuperate for the remainder of your recovery period. This cycle is repeated over and over until the entire circuit is complete.

## SAMPLE WORKOUTS

Regardless of your level of experience, there are a wide variety of exercises/activities that you can incorporate into your workout. Selectorized machines – those in which the resistance can be changed with a selector pin – are the ideal tools for circuit training since they allow you to change the resistance quickly. Popular exercises that can be done with selectorized machines include the chest press, lat pulldown, lateral raise, seated row, tricep extension, bicep curl, back extension, leg press, leg extension, leg curl, calf raise, abdominal and rotary torso. If you prefer, you can do many of these exercises with free weights (barbells and dumbbells). So instead of doing a chest press on a machine, you can do a bench press with a barbell; instead of doing a seated row on a machine, you can do a bent-over row with a dumbbell.

Similar to the warm-up, you can choose your favorite aerobic activities for circuit training. Many of these have been mentioned previously.

Samples of circuit-training workouts for beginner, intermediate and advanced enthusiasts are shown in Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, respectively.

**Figure 5.1: Sample of a Circuit-Training Workout for a Beginner Level.**

**Chest Press**  
**Lat Pulldown**  
**Aerobic Activity**  
**Bicep Curl**  
**Abdominal Machine**  
**Aerobic Activity**

**Notes:**

1. For the first week, perform one cycle (or “circuit”) of the six exercises/activities. In the second week, increase this to two cycles. Once the Beginner Level becomes less difficult and requires little effort, progress to the Intermediate Level.
2. In the strength-training exercises, do 20 seconds worth of repetitions with a resistance that’s about 50% of your maximum strength.
3. Do the aerobic activity (of your choice) for 30 seconds of all-out effort.
4. Take no more than about 40 seconds to recover between exercises/activities.

**Figure 5.2: Sample of a Circuit-Training Workout for an Intermediate Level.**

**Chest Press**  
**Lat Pulldown**  
**Aerobic Activity**

**Bicep Curl**  
**Tricep Extension**  
**Aerobic Activity**  
**Seated Row**  
**Leg Press**  
**Aerobic Activity**

**Notes:**

1. For the first week, perform one cycle (or “circuit”) of the nine exercises/activities. In the second week, increase this to two cycles. Once the Intermediate Level becomes less difficult and requires little effort, progress to the Advanced Level.
2. In the strength-training exercises, do 30 seconds worth of repetitions with a resistance that’s about 50% of your maximum strength.
3. Do the aerobic activity (of your choice) for 60 seconds of all-out effort.
4. Take no more than about 20 seconds to recover between exercises/activities.

**Figure 5.3: Sample of a Circuit-Training Workout for an Advanced Level.**

**Chest Press**  
**Lat Pulldown**  
**Aerobic Activity**  
**Bicep Curl**  
**Tricep Extension**  
**Aerobic Activity**  
**Seated Row**  
**Leg Press**

**Figure 5.2:**

**Sample of a Circuit-Training Workout for an Intermediate Level.**

**Chest Press**  
**Lat Pulldown**  
**Aerobic Activity**  
**Bicep Curl**  
**Tricep Extension**  
**Aerobic Activity**  
**Seated Row**  
**Leg Press**  
**Aerobic Activity**





Figure 5.3:  
Sample of a Circuit-Training  
Workout for an Advanced  
Level.

Chest Press

Lat Pulldown

Aerobic Activity

Bicep Curl

Tricep Extension

Aerobic Activity

Seated Row

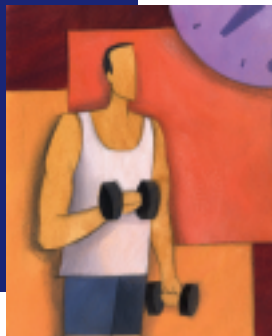
Leg Press

Aerobic Activity

Leg Extension

Leg Curl

Aerobic Activity



**Aerobic Activity**  
**Leg Extension**  
**Leg Curl**  
**Aerobic Activity**

**Notes:**

1. For the first week, perform one cycle (or “circuit”) of the 12 exercises/activities. In the second week, increase this to two cycles. Once two cycles become less difficult and require little effort, increase the duration of the aerobic activity.
2. In the strength-training exercises, do 40 seconds worth of repetitions with a resistance that’s about 50% of your maximum strength.
3. Do the aerobic activity (of your choice) for two minutes with an all-out effort.
4. Take as little time as possible to recover between exercises/activities.

**COOLING DOWN**

To ensure a safe and productive workout, it’s imperative for you to do cool-down activities after completing your circuit training. An effective method of cooling down can be walking on a treadmill, pedaling a stationary bicycle or using an elliptical machine. No matter what activity you select, do it at a relatively slow pace for about three minutes.

As with warm-up exercises, finish the cool-down routine with a series of gentle stretches. Hold each stretch for at least 20 seconds. Since your muscles will be warm after circuit training, you’ll be able to stretch your muscles farther during the cool down.



The leg extension is an important component of the Advanced Level of circuit training.